

**Historic District Commission
Town Hall, Room 204
Final Meeting Minutes, April 14, 2015**

Meeting called to order at 7:30 PM. Attending Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann (KAB), David Honn (DH), Pamela Lynn (PL), Ron Regan (RR), Anita Rogers (AR) and David Foley (DF).

David Shoemaker (DS) absent.

7:00 PM Citizens' Questions: None

7:01 PM Unanimously approved February 25, 2015 Minutes.

7:02 PM David Honn: Report from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) Historic Preservation Seminar held at the Lexington Historic Society headquarters on March 30, 2015:

DH shared the existence of a very useful database (MACRIS) allowing comparisons of historic districts across towns. A Chapter 40C historic district may be as small as one property. It was noted that Somerville has created hundreds of Chapter 40C historic districts using this approach. The HDC could consider protecting isolated Acton historic properties in this manner.

Massachusetts Historic Commission head, Chris Skelley, advocated for non-regulatory preservation techniques such as educational seminars, walking tours, topical speakers, educating town officials, etc. as an effective tool for preservation as a substitute for the regulatory approach embodied in Chapter 40C. Some towns, such as Wellesley, have set up "Neighborhood Conservation Districts" also known as "Historic District Lite" which allow for a less onerous approach than a full-fledged Chapter 40C. These Neighborhood Conservation Districts can function as a precursor to Chapter 40C historic district status or remain as a preservation method on their own.

Wellesley shared concerns over teardowns. When counted, it was

recognized that the town had lost 122 properties over the previous 10 years. DH suggested that Acton conduct a similar survey. Wellesley has also successfully banned cul-de-sacs despite legal challenges. Their intent was to preserve single family properties that could be developed into small dead-end subdivisions thus altering a neighborhood's character. Weston has not done a good job of protecting its historical properties; particularly well known modernist houses of the 1950s-1960's. It was noted that town officials seem to be lacking sufficient knowledge of the values of historic preservation.

DH shared handouts on demolition delays and the difference between local historic districts and National Register districts. The handouts will be placed in Docushare.

KAB summarized the key points. One property can qualify as an historic district and conservation districts might be a future strategy for Maple and Martin Street.

7:15 PM 95 Main St. - Appl. 1505: New Gutters

RR clarified that the structure does not currently have sufficient gutters. Using the photos submitted with the application, RR explained the the aluminum half round gutters come in the "musket" brown color.

KAB indicated that the gutters should be smooth.

RR moved to accept Appl. 1505 to apply 6 inch half-round aluminum gutters to the location specified in the application. Color to be musket brown.

Finding: The structure has a half round gutter

Condition: The down spouts be round.

Seconded by AR. Accepted unanimously.

7:28 PM 30 Windsor Ave. - Application 1507: Remove handicap ramp

Ron Regan recused himself as the applicant.

PL, as liaison, explained the issue. The existing handicap ramp and platform to which it is attached were added to the side entrance in 2004 to aid the then resident who relied on a wheelchair. There was no ramp in the inventory photo from the 1990's when the property was included within the historic district. Both now constitute hazards due to deterioration. The applicant intends to remove the entire structure and repair in kind any elements of the original structure including the stairs that may be necessary.

RR explained that he had tried to maintain the structure but had had a joist failure. Portions of the platform are also failing.

PL moved to accept Application 1507 to remove the handicap ramp and porch extension, repair in kind the original stairs and porch that still exist under the extension, and repair in kind the cornerboard and siding cut for the porch extension and stairs.

Seconded by AR.

DH wondered whether an application is even necessary. KAB thought so as it is attached to the structure. Considering that repairs on the original house may be necessary, an application seems appropriate.

Approved unanimously pending abutter notification.

7:35 PM 14 – 20 School St. – Application 1508: Window replacement

RR explained that the applicant had submitted an application in August, 2014, Application #1426, but after discussions decided not to Replace the windows and withdrew the application. At some later time the windows were replaced with 6 over 6 windows due to the severity of the winter.

KAB explained that the issue is whether to extend but shorten the time line for replacing the windows that were installed without HDC approval.

RR moved to accept Application 1508 to replace 21 6 over 6 lite vinyl

windows on the front left and right of the building visible from School St. with Jeld-wen Tradition Plus wood double hung pocket units with 2 over 2 lites and 7/8" SDL as defined in the amended application.

Seconded by AR.

AR added that discussion continues about appropriate screens. The windows the applicant has chosen will all be the same and similar to those installed at 525-531 Mass. Ave.

Accepted unanimously.

7:39 PM Discussion of Memo on Zoning Changes Proposed by Scott Kutil

DH explained that SK engaged a lawyer who determined that Acton's HDC bylaw differs from the state Chapter 40C law with regard to specific issues including the regulations of Floor Area Ratio (FAR), height, and view corridor. The lawyer suggested revising the Acton HDC bylaw to bring it into conformity with Chapter 40C. In a previous meeting several months ago, town planner Roland Bartl was in favor of this approach. It was noted that although Chapter 40C allows districts to regulate paint colors, presently the HDC is not in favor of conforming the local bylaw with Chapter 40C.

It was also stated that a change to the Zoning Bylaws Table of Dimensional Regulations through the use of footnotes to differentiate properties in the historic districts violates the so-called "Uniformity Rule," i.e. each property must be treated the same way within a given zoning jurisdiction. Therefore the only way to differentiate the historic districts with regard to further zoning protections is to create historic district overlay zones.

KAB indicated that hammerhead lots within the districts are likely to remain an issue.

AR asked where proposed signage changes would be included. KAB and DH indicated that signage requirements belong in the town

bylaws (not the HDC's Rules and Regulations) changes to which must pass town meeting by a 2/3 vote.

7:45 PM 14 – 20 School St. – Application 1508: Window replacement

The previous discussion resumed with owners.

AR provided a summary of the resolution for replacing all the specified windows with Jeld-wen replacement sashes. The issue then becomes if all of the windows were to be done at once, it would help the owners to postpone the initial installation date but shorten the final installation date.

AR moved to make an amendment to the original certificate to allow all the windows to be installed by August 31, 2015.

Seconded by RR.

DF asked when the original date was and AR responded Dec. 31, 2015.

Unanimously accepted.

7:50 PM 14-20 School St. – Garage door replacement

The owners indicated that the bottom two panels of existing garage door are damaged beyond repair. They wish to replace them with panels that match, a replacement in kind which should be a CNA.

7:55 PM 25 – 27 School St. - Application 1508: Change windows and front door

The applicants, Nan Xiao, Yike Chen and Melody Li joined the discussion.

RR explained that an application had been made but the applicants began the installation before meeting with the HDC. The recent installation were 2 over 2 vinyl windows

RR further explained he had spoken with Nan who had decided to hold off but then went ahead due to the severity of the winter.

AR favors the 2 over 2 solution.

RR moved to accept Application 1508 to replace windows 2 over 2 wood sash replacement to replace the vinyl on the left front and side totaling 21 windows with a deadline of July 31, 2015.

AR indicated that the windows will need to be painted for protection.

Seconded by AR. Accepted unanimously.

The applicants also plan to replace a door and brought pictures of several proposed doors.

KAB suggested that the two proposed doors do not match the vintage of the original structure.

AR suggests a four panel door would be more appropriate.

DH suggested checking the inventory sheets to consider the style of the original doors. KAB suggested discussing the doors at the next meeting.

8:25 PM Resumption of Zoning discussion

Signage changes must be in the bylaws. KAB reminded the group of the extent of prior conversations about sign changes including illuminated signs, and no neon, no LED.

DF suggested making a distinction between directly illuminated versus indirectly rather than focusing on the specific technology.

8:35 PM New Members and Officers

KAB reviewed the dates of each member's term. She is strongly considering resigning effective the end of June as her term ends.

Members discussed potential new members.

8:50 PM 29 Windsor Ave. – Application 1506: An Addition

RR recused himself but remained as a member of the public.

KAB outlined the process for the public meeting and suggested that all members visit the site before the public hearing on May 5th.

DH and AR thought it would be wise to ask for a drawing that shows the abutters' properties, the context for the addition.

9:00 PM Applicant Judy Kotanchik (JK) and architect Tom Pederman (TP) joined the discussion.

AR reviewed the proposed addition, a garage attached to a mud room with an office and bedroom behind it. Preliminary plans have been submitted and this is another chance to discuss them.

TP reviewed the property, a single family house c. 1846 with a more recent 1920s garage, a septic system located in the back, and the house within the setbacks.

There were few choices due to the location of the septic system, forcing the addition to be positioned to the side of the existing structure.

Looking at older photos the shutters have been removed but have been saved. Much of the existing gutters were pulled off during the winter storms. The thought now is to go with no gutters.

The plan has not really changed. The grade drops on the garage side ... No existing features on the existing house will be removed.

Currently there is no plan to take the existing garage down. Changes were made to the elevation based on HDC's suggestions, eliminated the cupola, added barn sash window high in the wall, double hung window in the mud room. All will be Marvin windows. All trim is painted wood. Roof to match the existing house matched the pitch to the main house. Much of this cannot be seen from the public way.

JK wants a two-car garage for resale value. She would like the garage to face forward as it would be easier for her to get in and out. For technical/cost reasons TP has oriented it on the side of the house.

KAB shared that a few of the neighbors have contacted the HDC with concerns. She suggested that it is wise to be in touch with abutters proactively. The applicant has and has considered their shared concern offering plantings to block the lights.

KAB asked TP about lighting issues. The neighbor on the garage side is concerned that cars entering and exiting the garage will have head lights going into the windows of their house. TP said that the down slope of the driveway will angle the lights away from the house.

DH felt TP had responded to the previous HDC suggestions. It is a more balanced structure in the revised plan. DH suggested bringing a "locus plan" so that neighbors can see the context.

DF had no questions and his concerns had already been expressed by others.

AR wondered about the attachment of the mud room to the main structure which seemed awkward. AR asked about the perception of an external ramp, whether it might be redundant. TP said it is a sloped walkway.

AR thought the shed trim board might also be used on the back to make it more connected. AR asked about windows on the side of the garage might be a little more quirky.

RR as a member of the public was concerned with the proposed orientation of the garage to the side not to the front. RR cited the fact that all of the properties in the district with garages/carriage houses have doors facing the street, a few are detached. DH asked whether other garages in the district are attached or detached and whether they are behind the house or not. His point was that this is different because it would be attached and not oriented to the rear.

9:32 PM KAB moved to adjourn. Seconded by DF.

Unanimously agreement to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

**Pamela Lynn
HDC Secretary**

